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Travel Montana, Department of Commerce, Matthew T. Cohn, Travel Director
406-444-2654 ■ fax 406-444-1800 ■ internet: travelmontana.state.mt.us

Image is Everything

Travel Montana is conducting an image research study. The goal of it is to help the state's tourism department better understand how consumers view Montana and to identify ways to increase their likelihood of choosing Montana as a travel destination. The last time a study of this type was conducted was in 1987.

"Since the inception of the 'bed tax' we have worked hard to promote the state," says Travel Montana Director Matthew Cohn. "In addition to our advertising efforts, there have been a lot of stories written and images shown of Montana and we need to understand how our image has changed in the minds of consumers." Cohn adds that the research will be used to formulate marketing strategies for the next few years.

The study will focus on how people view the state, including its perceived strengths and weaknesses. The process will also provide insight on what differentiates Montana from its competitors. Results of the survey will be available in December 1999.

"Bed Tax" Collections Up 3% For First Half Of 1999

Montana's statewide "bed tax" collections were up 3% for the first six months of 1999. Helena and Yellowstone Country reported the largest percentage of growth, with 10% and 9% respectively. Statewide "bed tax" collections amounted to $4.27 million compared to $4.15 million collected during the same six month period in 1998.

Among the state's official "bed tax" tourism organizations, four of the six tourism regions and five of the nine reporting communities saw collection increases.

Yellowstone Country's growth was followed by Glacier Country with a 3% increase, while Gold West Country and Custer Country both recorded a 2% growth. Russell Country reported an 11% decrease and Missouri River Country was down 13%. Some of this decrease is a result of delinquent collections and the numbers are anticipated to change.

Following Helena's lead was Whitefish with a 5% collection rise, while West Yellowstone, Billings and Missoula's collections increased 4%, 2% and 1% respectively. Bozeman held even. Kalispell, Butte and Great Falls experienced declines.

Travel Montana Director Matthew Cohn notes that following an excellent winter season, travel was a bit softer in the spring. "We projected an annual growth of about 2.5%, so we're still on target." Cohn added that early indications show that the summer quarter was strong in most areas of the state and future collection reports should reflect this.

Summer Media Tours A Success

The Publicity Office and the state's six tourism regions hosted 35 travel writers on eight media tours this summer season.

The travel writers who were on these trips came with assignments from such publications as *Ladies Home Journal, Home & Away, Coast to Coast, Country Inns Bed & Breakfast, Spokesman-Review, Better Homes & Gardens, New York Post, Travel America, St. Louis Post Dispatch, Wild Bird, Persimmon Hill, MotorHome, Grand Rapids Magazine, Trailer Life, Senior Magazine* and *News from Indian Country.*

The media tours were as diverse as Montana's landscape and cultural treasures. The writers traveled to the wildlife refuges in Missouri River Country, retraced the journey of Captain William Clark on the Yellowstone River in Yellowstone and Custer Countries, experienced many of Glacier Country's festivals and events, hit the links at Yellowstone Country's golf courses, toured the state's five minor league baseball diamonds, discovered some backroad B&Bs and guest ranches in Yellowstone and Russell Countries and followed the historic Nez Perce Trail.

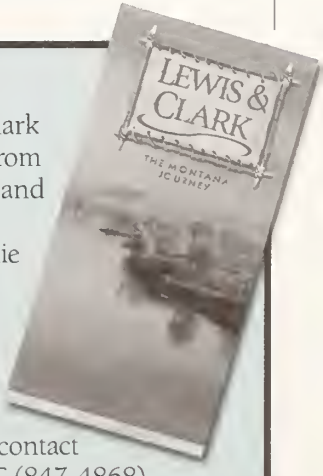
The Publicity Office and the tourism regions are now in the process of planning for their 2000 media tours.

Hot Off the Press

The Publications Office has recently revised its Lewis & Clark Guide. The 18-page brochure is filled with valuable tidbits from the expedition, beautiful photographs depicting the journey and statewide resource phone numbers, addresses and websites.

According to Travel Montana's Publications Manager Donnie Sexton, the updated guide was designed to make it easy for visitors to access pertinent Lewis & Clark sites and help them find unique things to do along the route.

Other newly produced publications include the "1999-2000 Winter Guide" and the October 1999-April 2000 "Calendar of Events." For copies of any of these publications, contact the Travel Montana office at (406) 444- 2654 or 800-VISITMT (847-4868).



That's A Wrap: Film Office News

The Montana Film Office would like to remind all Montana-based crew members and production support service providers that links to the Montana Film Office website, www.montanafilm.com, are available. There's a $25 fee to cover administrative costs. Contact Michelle at 406-444-3762 or michelle@visitmt.com for more information.

August/September Production Activity

German Travel Feature

The film and publicity offices worked together to assist the German television program Direct-TV. The German crew spent three weeks in the state shooting various venues for their 45-minute PBS-style travel program. The group visited a working ranch in Shawmut, climbed aboard the Charlie Russell Chew-Choo in Lewistown, floated the Missouri River, toured Virginia City and attended a rodeo in Three Forks.

Commercial

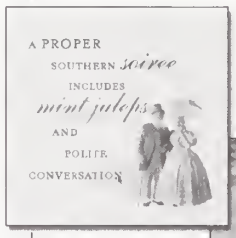
Nisson - Lewistown (filmed several days on the Driver Education track)

Still Shoots

German magazine - Big Timber and Bozeman areas (article on guest ranches); Beck Minneapolis - Bainville and Livingston (stock footage photos).

NTA Convention in Nashville, Tennessee

Group and Overseas Marketing Manager Pam Gosink and Group Travel Specialist Marlee Iverson will attend the National Tour Association (NTA) conference November 6-10 in



Nashville. Pam and Marlee will meet by appointment with group tour operators who plan motorcoach itineraries to the state. Approximately 24 Montana tourism suppliers will also attend.

Yellowstone Winter Use EIS Comments Sought

Through November 15, Montanans have a chance to comment on the National Park Service's winter management plans for Yellowstone Park. The Park Service's preferred alternative (Alternative B) includes plowing the road from West Yellowstone to Old Faithful during winter months. The Montana Governor's Office, which has coordinated Travel Montana's and other state agencies' review of the plan, has questioned the rationale behind this proposal and others included in the Park Service's preferred alternative.

The Draft Winter Use Plan (EIS) is available for public review on the internet at www.nps.gov/yell/press/. Public comments should be directed to: Clifford Hawkes, NPS, 12795 West Alameda Parkway, Lakewood, CO 80228, E-mail: yell_winter_use@nps.gov.

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Calendar of Events

October

13 Pre-NTA caucus meeting - West Yellowstone
14-17 Italian Magazine FAM Custer/Yellowstone/Gold West

L&C Community Planning Workshops 1-5 p.m:

12 Laurel, Public Library
13 Miles City Community College
14 Wolf Point, Sherman Inn
19 Great Falls, Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center
20 Lolo, Little Community Center
21 Whitehall, Town Hall

November

6-10 NTA - Nashville, TN

Travel Montana
1424 Ninth Avenue
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Helena, MT 59620-0533

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